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MILITARY EXECUTION:

SIN FOUND OUT—THE MELTING POWER OF
KINDNESS.

Toward the end of last century, during the war with France, Mr. Griffin received a letter from a friend in London, mentioning that two young men of a highly respectable family, offended at some restraint imposed on them by their parents, had left their father's house, with the determination to go to sea; that it was likely they would be found at the rendezvous at Portsmouth, and requesting him to inquire about them, and, if possible, persuade them to return. He soon found they were there, though they assumed a false name. Having prevailed on them to call upon him, he expostulated with them on their conduct, representing to them in as strong colors as he could the distress they had inflicted on their parents, and particularly that their affectionate mother was in a state of the deepest anguish. He succeeded in persuading the younger to return under his paternal roof. When he seemed somewhat softened by Mr. Griffin's expostulations, he said, "Well, I think I will go home again." His brother, with a most determined air, looked on him with a scowl of indignation and contempt, telling him he was a poor milksop, and adding that he might do as he pleased, but for his part he was determined to go to sea, and,

after the manner he had been treated, he would never return to his father's house.

When Mr. Griffin found he could make no impression upon him, the last thing he said to him before he left him, was: "Well, young man, remember one thing: your sin will one day find you out." The younger son returned to his father, and the elder went aboard a man-of-war.

Several years passed, and Mr. Griffin had almost forgotten the occurrence, when, one Sabbath morning, a ship-of-war came into the roads, and a message was sent to him to come and see a young man who was sentenced to death. As soon as his other engagements permitted him, he went aboard, and found this bold and resolute young man lying in irons, while he was condemned to be executed during the following week. On Mr. Griffin's inquiring what was the cause that had brought him into such distressing and disgraceful circumstances, he was informed that he had struck one of the officers: an act of insubordination which could not be passed over without all discipline being destroyed. At his trial every advantage was given him to plead some palliation at least of his offence, as the officers saw he was quite a superior young man, and one born to better prospects. He was asked if he was drunk. "No!" Had he not drunk anything that day (as they were anxious to mitigate the punishment, if it could be done consistently with the discipline of the ship)? He replied, "No!" In short, it was found necessary to condemn him to death. Some of the officer remarked to Mr. Griffin: "We see he is a superior young man, of a very high spirit; he would have made a capital officer, but one guilty of such insubordination cannot be allowed to escape."

Mr. Griffin conversed with the prisoner. He still maintained his high bearing, would make no apology, and seemed determined (as the phrase is) to die game. Mr. Griffin immediately came ashore, and got an application forwarded without delay to the Admiralty, stating all the circumstances of the case. In short, through the instrumentality of the gentleman who was then member of Parliament for Portsmouth, he procured a pardon just in time to save the young man's life.

All the preparations were made for having the sentence executed when the pardon was communicated to him. "Here," said Mr. Griffin, "we saw the effect of unexpected kindness. That heart which nothing could subdue, which even the terrors of a violent and ignominious death seemed incapable of appalling, was completely melted when a pardon was announced to him. It was too much for his feelings. He fell before it, and burst into tears."

When the circumstances of the case were known, having obtained his discharge, he returned to the bosom of his father's family. As he had assumed a false name while at sea his history was only known to his own immediate connections, and to Mr. Griffin himself, who most properly concealed the name. Mr. Griffin also informed me that he was in the habit of visiting the family when he went to London, and at the time he related the story this condemned seaman, now transformed into a young gentleman, was engaged in business, and held a respectable station in society.

It is not easy to conceive with what very peculiar emotions this runaway, headstrong youth, who had so nearly escaped a public execution, must have met so kind a benefactor—one to whom he was placed under such extraordinary and incalculable obligations.

We have here a specimen of the melting effects of kindness. It accomplished what stern law, and the mere dread of punishment, nay, of an ignominious death, never could. Such is the effect which the grace manifested in the gospel is eminently fitted to produce. Many who have set at nought all the thunders of Mount Sinai have been effectually subdued by the still, small voice from Mount Calvary. It is the precious proclamation of pardon through Jesus Christ that wins the sinner's heart, that brings down every high thought and lofty imagination, and, bringing him to the obedience of faith, makes him bow to the sceptre of the Prince of peace. My dear reader, God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

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